

CAHS

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Testimony before Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

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SB927: AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER PREPARATION

SB928: AN ACT CONCERNING REQUIREMENTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) would like to thank you, Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee to submit testimony in support of SB927 and SB928. It is our belief that these proposed bills directly address the steps necessary to ensure that Connecticut's children are provided with high-quality early learning environments to put them on a trajectory for success.

Connecticut's commitment to quality early care and education was evidenced in the establishment of the School Readiness Program in 1997. Likewise, the accompanying mandate to have all teachers in that program acquiring a Bachelor's Degree also speaks to the importance of delivering high-quality early learning experiences. Nonetheless, while that mandate is well intentioned, Connecticut's higher education infrastructure and the resources of child care providers do not facilitate adherence to that mandate. Connecticut's higher education institutions are unable to adequately offer the necessary courses and degrees of study in Early Care and Education to ensure that existing teachers and those coming into the field meet the outlined mandate within the designated timeline. In addition, existing teachers speak to the financial and time constraints that further obstruct the ability to meet the mandate.

In addition to addressing the inability of all teachers in the School Readiness Program to acquire a Bachelor's Degree by 2015, S.B. 927 expands the expectation of heightened qualifications to include all early care preschool programs accepting state funds. The amendment to previous legislation to have 50% of teachers attaining a Bachelor's and the other 50% acquiring an Associate's Degree creates a vehicles for realistic quality outcomes, with the extended deadline for all teachers in programs receiving state funds to attain a Bachelor's Degree by 2020.

The request in S.B.928 for the Department of Higher Education to conduct a study on issues concerning alternate routes to certification in early childhood education and teacher preparation to effectively meet the rigorous demands to produce well-trained teachers should also include a study of the level of preparation being provided to prospective early care and education teachers to administer curricula on such subject matters as emergent literacy in preschool. The inquiry of how well prospective teachers are being prepared to teach should include a look at the entire spectrum from preschool on up.

CAHS supports the concepts of both SB 927 and 928 to create vehicles for improvements in the delivery system of high-quality early care and education to Connecticut's children, families and providers, and commends the indication in both bills that such changes are not the responsibility of one department but will require the collaboration of the Departments of Higher Education, Education, and the Department of Social Services.

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